

FLASH Curriculum Film Reviews

Public Health - Seattle & King County
Family Planning Health Education Team

Best Practice Regarding Film in the Classroom

1. Film has its place in the repertoire of teaching strategies. It can employ storytelling, evoke feelings, and influence students' perceptions of norms. It can provide three-dimensional explanations of anatomy. It cannot replace a chance to ask questions, to grapple with ideas through group activities and discussion, and to practice skills. In the case of sexual health content, **film can be a useful supplement to [FLASH](#) or another curriculum. It is never best practice to use film as a stand-alone alternative to interactive lessons.**

2. **We strongly recommend teaching about puberty and sexual health in an ordinary, co-ed group.** Separating the sexes tends to exacerbate teasing, bullying and cross-gender harassment. And a goal of [FLASH](#) is to foster communication, increasing students' comfort discussing sexual health with a parent or guardian of any gender, a clinician of any gender, or a future partner of any gender. We believe that to separate classes, even for one lesson, sends the wrong message and undermines achieving this outcome.

If you worry that students won't ask sensitive questions aloud in front of classmates of another gender, make sure to use Lesson 1 (the climate setting lesson) to establish a tone, set ground rules, and provide a safe time when everybody writes questions. If you have an especially modest, shy group, particularly if the class is culturally diverse with many first generation immigrant or refugee students, you could offer a preview get-together prior to the unit where families and students can attend *together* and learn how the teacher plans to ensure that people treat each other kindly. But don't let your own discomfort or your students' push you to separate them by gender.

Yes = recommended (strengths outweigh flaws and we offer suggested scripting for simple teacher follow-up)

OK = not recommended, but still usable (not so flawed that it should no longer be used, if your school can't afford to replace it)

No = not still usable (flaws outweigh strengths and are not correctable by simple teacher follow-up)

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That's a Family!

(2000)

Yes = recommended (strengths outweigh flaws and we offer suggested scripting for simple teacher follow-up)

Strengths:

- Diverse cast, with children as the spokespeople for their own type of family (mixed ethnicities, races or religions; adoptive; divorced, including stepparents; grandparent guardians; lesbian moms or gay dads; single parents)
- Discusses the challenges of being in each type of family but emphasizes the strengths each child sees in families like theirs; empathy-building
- Offers mirrors of your students' own families; every child will see something in the film like their own life experience
- Offers windows into families different from your students' own
- Available with Spanish subtitles
- Comes with a useful teachers' guide – or use it with **4/5/6 FLASH [lesson 2](#)** (the Family lesson)

Flaws or issues a teacher who uses the film should address:

- A little long for primary grades (35 min.), but a teacher can show one chapter at a time.
- Maybe a little *too* positive, in the sense that each child is shown at a time when they're doing fine. The child of divorce reflects back on feeling confused soon after her parents separated, for example, but she is happy now. A teacher could acknowledge the students who may not be feeling as happy in their families at the moment,

"Most families go through rougher times and happier times; you are seeing all these kids at happier times in their lives."

- The film does not introduce every possible configuration of family. A teacher could lead a discussion about which kinds of families were not portrayed (foster families and group homes, couples without children, bigger families living together). NOTE: The film does contain two-parent-biological families in the mixed race chapter. It also contains a multigenerational family in the divorce chapter.
- One of the children explaining what it means to be adopted says, *"Some people think adoption is just like when your birth mom dumps you on the street and someone comes to pick you up. But that's not true."* The problem is it *is* true for some children who might be hurt by the dismissive tone. To acknowledge that some adopted students may have, in fact, been abandoned at birth, a teacher should mention the error,

"Sue said that adoption doesn't mean a person's birth mom just left them on the street. Some new parents do feel so overwhelmed that they have to leave their baby. It doesn't mean they don't love the baby; they just may know there is no way they can take good care of the baby."

FLASH Curriculum Film Reviews

You, Your Body & Puberty

(2004)

Yes = recommended (strengths outweigh flaws and we offer suggested scripting for simple teacher follow-up). **There are coed, male and female versions, standard and alternate versions. We recommend the co-ed, standard version.**

Strengths:

- Not condescending; respectful of the student, even though much of it was scripted
- Pro-social messages about cross-gender friendships not needing to change as young people mature
- Starts with the commonalities across sexes, even introducing students to androgens as the source of many changes that people of any sex might experience
- Offers reassurances about spontaneous erections and nocturnal emissions and about it being normal to feel a little self-conscious for a time
- Models empathetic parent-child communication, co-ed communication (brother and sister, friends of different sexes, teacher with a mixed-sex group of students), and communication with diverse trusted adults (relaxed teacher, dad, grandma, even older sibling)
- Diverse cast

Flaws or issues a teacher who uses the film should address:

- We worry about the oversimplified message that women's breasts even out eventually. A teacher should say,
"Many women's breasts even out in size and shape eventually; some don't. That's normal, too."
- The graphic of the egg made a human ovum the size of a grape and implied that a girl would see that grape expelled during her period. It seemed, too, to say that a fertilized egg wouldn't change at all in appearance until after the birth of a full term baby. A teacher should say,
"The egg in the graphic is enlarged thousands of times to make it visible. In reality it is the size of a grain of sand or the period at the end of a sentence. There is not a visible egg in her underwear during her menstrual period. And it changes and grows from the size of a grain of sand into the size and shape of a newborn infant over about nine months. It doesn't look like an egg at birth."
- Didn't acknowledge cultural differences of opinion regarding deodorant. A teacher could say,
"Most – not all -- American adults recommend that kids start using deodorant at puberty. Find out what your family or your culture teaches about it."
- The message that hair gets oily quickly and needs to be shampooed every day or two assumes that students have hair typical of many Caucasians, Native Americans, and Asians. Many children of African descent would be over-washing their typically-dry hair if they shampooed that often. A teacher could say,
"The film is biased when it says everyone's hair gets oilier at puberty and needs to be shampooed every day or two. That's true for some people, typically those whose hair is straight. For others whose hair is naturally curly and tends to be dryer, washing it once a week or less may be fine, even during puberty."
- We wish they had acknowledged that a person might have crushes on someone of any gender. A teacher can say just that:
"The film didn't mention it, but of course people might start noticing crushes on boys, girls, or all different people. Or they may not notice crushes at all when they're your age."
- It is inaccurate to say that girls "begin producing eggs at puberty." A teacher should explain,
*"Girls are actually born with all the primitive cells that will become eggs. Usually, a girl's eggs begin, one at a time, to **mature** at puberty. Similarly, boys are born with primitive cells that will start becoming sperm once **he** reaches puberty."*

FLASH Curriculum Film Reviews

The Puberty Workshop: All 5 films

(2012)

Yes = recommended (strengths outweigh flaws and we offer suggested scripting for simple teacher follow-up)

Strengths of all 5 films:

- The five Puberty Workshop films come with a 115-page teachers' resource book containing pre-post tests, student activities, and more.
- The young people seem to be speaking for themselves; if they are scripted, it isn't at all distracting.
- The adults are warm, respectful, and clear. Not at all patronizing.
- Good ethnic diversity.
- The graphics are mostly clear, appealing, and easy to understand.
- A Spanish subtitled version is available.
- Each film in the series ends with a synopsis.

Flaws (issues a teacher who uses the films should address):

- All 5 films repeatedly mention "your parents" in a way that implies every student has them. And in film two, a girl speaks of her personal experience as if everyone shares it: "You're going shopping [for your first bra] with your mom ..." In these ways the film series renders invisible the children in every classroom whose parents are divorced and those who live with a grandparent or another guardian because one or both birth parents may be deceased, incarcerated, or not in their lives for various other reasons. Students need to see themselves and their lives reflected in the curriculum. The films do mention "relatives" in passing but a teacher should elaborate:

"I noticed that all these films mention talking to your parents. I know that not everyone has both a mom and a dad; some people have neither or at least don't live with them. And even those of you who do may find lots of other adults helpful to talk with, too, around this time in your life. You may live with grandparents or other guardians or you may want to talk with an aunt or uncle; a parent's partner, boyfriend, or girlfriend; a close friend of the family; or maybe your best friend's parent or guardian. For some of you, it might be a counselor, a doctor, or someone at camp or at a church, synagogue, temple, or mosque. The grown-up you most trust may not even be the same sex as you. What matters is that they're someone you respect and who respects you."

- Cite various ages when puberty occurs. In some cases they are unnecessarily specific, pinpointing that girls are typically in 5th grade and boys in 7th grade when puberty begins, for example. That will trouble the majority of students who start younger or older than those grades. In other cases the films use age ranges older than those currently cited by the American Academy of Pediatrics, especially for African-American children. A teacher should reinforce the widening range of normal,

*"The films mention what grades or ages **some** people start puberty, but they also explain that there's a very wide range of normal. The truth is the age range is even bigger than these films say. It is common for girls to start noticing the **first** puberty changes anywhere from **7 to 13 years old** ^{1,2} or 2nd to 8th grades, a couple of years before they get their first period. Guys will see **their** first changes of puberty some time when they are **9 to 13 years old** ^{3,4} or in 4th to 8th grade, a year or two before they might have a wet dream. There's a very wide range of what's normal. The point is that your body knows when it is supposed to begin changing. You don't need to worry."*

FLASH Curriculum Film Reviews

The Puberty Workshop: Film 1 ... What is Puberty?

(2012)

Yes = recommended (strengths outweigh flaws and we offer suggested scripting for simple teacher follow-up)

Strengths:

- Explains the diversity of what's normal (e.g., ages, sizes) in ways that are very reassuring and accurate, mostly avoiding averages and speaking instead about ranges.
- Introduces the Tanner Scale to help students anticipate what comes next in their own journeys.
- Addresses most of the changes that happen to all young people regardless of their sex (e.g., hair on arms and legs getting thicker). That emphasis supports the **FLASH** key concept that males and females are more alike than different, a critical foundation for sexual violence prevention.
- Acknowledges that there are various cultural beliefs about girls shaving their legs and armpits. Similarly, encourages the use of deodorant gently, while not assuming, as some films do, that all students' families believe in it (i.e. "It might be time ...").
- Suggests washing one's body daily and one's hair "regularly" at puberty. Hence, it doesn't assume, as some films do, that all students' hair is oily. Many students, especially many African-American students have dry hair that would be damaged by daily shampoos.
- Acknowledges possible feelings of awkwardness while still leaning toward positivity. That is consistent with the **FLASH** perspective that growing up, communicating with one's family, and acting mature can also be exciting and fun.
- Introduces the endocrine system.

Flaws or issues a teacher who uses the film should address:

- Fails to acknowledge that many girls will also notice growth of some face and chest hair. A teacher should say,

"The film forgot to mention that it's not unusual for a girl to get some chest hair, too. Maybe in the center of her chest or maybe around her nipples. And she might notice a little bit thicker or darker facial hair than when she was younger, too. Either one's normal; it's a matter of a person's genes how much hair they will get at puberty."

- Assumes heterosexual crushes will blossom at puberty in its scripting and, especially, its imagery. That will worry both the child who is *not* having crushes and who may not until their late teens or twenties and also the one who *is* having crushes on people of their own sex or people of more than one sex. A teacher could convey more inclusivity by adding,

"Some people start noticing more crushes at puberty. Others may not like someone in that way until their late teens or twenties. And it could be a boy or a girl or maybe some of each."

- A graphic of the endocrine system implies that progesterone comes only from testicles (not the ovaries) and that androgens come only from ovaries (not the testicles). A teacher could clarify:

*"Everyone, male and female, makes both male and female sex hormones. Men make **more** androgens than women, especially testosterone. And women make **more** estrogen and progesterone than men. But everyone has both male and female hormones."*

- Says that "boys can begin to shave their faces when their hair grows thicker and coarser." We wish it had shown the same respect for cultural and religious beliefs as it did regarding girls shaving their armpits and legs. A teacher could add,

"The film seemed to say that all boys start to shave if they get facial hair. You need to know, too, that in some religions and cultures, men don't shave their faces, even when they're adults."

NOTE: Also see page 4.

FLASH Curriculum Film Reviews

The Puberty Workshop: Film 2 ... Girls & Puberty

(2012)

Yes = recommended (strengths outweigh flaws and we offer suggested scripting for simple teacher follow-up)

Strengths:

- Introduces the reproductive system in a clear and thorough way, even using the term “endometrium” to describe the lining of the uterus. It isn’t essential to give students this much detail until high school but it shows a level of respect for their intelligence that may inspire uncharacteristically mature behavior.
- Acknowledges that boys may have many of the same feelings girls have during puberty and adolescence.
- Describes the diversity of breast sizes.
- Conveys that breast itchiness, tenderness, and stretch marks are normal.
- Mentions both pads and tampons.
- Ends on a very positive note regarding feeling “secure in your new amazing body.”

Flaws or issues a teacher who uses the film should address:

- Indicates that differences in size between the breasts will eventually even out. That's not always true. A teacher might add,

Many girls' breasts even out as they get older. However, some adult women still have one breast larger than the other. This can be perfectly normal, just as one foot or one hand or one of a guy's testicles may be larger than the other or shaped a little differently.”

- Mentions that it may be time to get a bra when a girl's nipples start showing. A teacher could mention other reasons people get their first bra,

“The film mentioned one reason girls might get their first bras – when their nipples start to show. Other times they might want to talk with a parent or guardian about getting one are if it kind of hurts when they run or play sports, if their friends get bras and they don't want to feel different, or if they just feel modest.”

- Describes some benefits of a tampon without acknowledging families differences of values about them. A teacher should suggest,

“A girl may want to talk with someone in her family about whether to use pads or tampons or both. It depends what she's comfortable with but different families also may have different perspectives about it.”

- We recommend the film for grades 4-7, but a teacher in grades 5-7 should explain here or in a separate pregnancy lesson how pregnancy occurs:

*“The film didn't say how a sperm and egg meet. I know some of you know this, but just to clarify ... A doctor can help a woman get pregnant if necessary, but **usually** the sperm and egg meet in the woman's fallopian tubes after she's had intercourse (the kind of sex where the penis goes into the vagina).”*

NOTE: Also see page 4.

FLASH Curriculum Film Reviews

The Puberty Workshop: Film 3 ... Boys & Puberty

(2012)

Yes = recommended (strengths outweigh flaws and we offer suggested scripting for simple teacher follow-up)

Strengths:

- Discourages “othering” of girls with messages like, “Girls are no crazier than boys.” and “girls have the same feelings as boys. This is a fundamental building block toward the [FLASH](#) curriculum’s goal of reducing the perpetration of sexual violence.
- Indicates that it is a family’s decision whether to circumcise a baby boy.
- Normalizes the experience of spontaneous erections.
- Explains that almost half of boys notice breast tenderness during puberty.
- Encourages the use of a jock strap for playing sports.

Flaws (issues a teacher who uses the film should address):

- Describes the mechanics of why one’s voice deepens at puberty without really indicating that it happens to some degree to both girls and boys. A teacher could add,
“A girl’s voice usually deepens a bit at puberty, too. Just not as much on average a boy’s does.”
- It says that a man typically ejaculates about 3-5 million sperm at a time. That isn’t accurate. The numbers are astronomical anyway and not worth remembering necessarily, but if a student asks, a teacher could correct the number,
“An adult man actually releases between 30 and 750 million sperm each time he ejaculates.”⁵
- The film misspeaks about the path of a sperm cell. It says the vas deferens carries sperm to the epididymis and then the urethra. The teacher should clarify,
“I think the film meant to say that the vas deferens carries sperm from the epididymis to the urethra, and then they travel through the urethra, out of the body.”
- The film was a bit confusing with respect to how long mature sperm can live, citing a figure of 24 to 72 hours. Accuracy will matter later when students learn about Emergency Contraception (effective to some extent up to 5 days after intercourse). So a teacher should clarify,
“The film was a bit confusing in terms of how long sperm live. Outside the body, they will not live very long unless they’re stored at body temperature or frozen by a lab. But if they’re released into a woman’s reproductive system, some may live as long as 5 days waiting for the release of a mature egg! So a woman could have intercourse on Sunday and get pregnant the following Friday!”

NOTE: Also see page 4.

FLASH Curriculum Film Reviews

The Puberty Workshop: Film 4 ... New Emotions and Feelings

(2012)

Yes = recommended (strengths outweigh flaws and we offer suggested scripting for simple teacher follow-up)

Strengths:

- Encourages communicating with family and other trusted adults
- Discourages comparing your body with others' bodies, explaining that photos in magazines are enhanced with lighting, airbrushing, etc. and that peers' develop at different times and rates
- Asserts that teasing others about their changing bodies is not harmless if it makes the other person feel bad
- Normalizes and cites advantages of not dating until high school
- Normalizes and cites advantages of families' dating rules
- Normalizes feeling self-conscious about appearance and other fluctuating emotions
- Asserts that self-control, regardless of hormonal influences, is a mature behavior
- The physicians both use gender-neutral terms in describing crushes, explaining that people might feel "attracted to someone" after puberty or during adolescence, avoiding terms like the *opposite* sex.

Flaws or issues a teacher who uses the film should address:

- Both the young adults described not having been allowed to date or not wanting to date until they were 15, making it a bit of a magic number. A teacher could add,
"Some people hang out with groups of friends or with just one friend all the way through high school. They may not date at all."
- While the adults' descriptions of crushes do a good job of using gender neutral language, every student voice describes a heterosexual crush. That could leave students who are having same-sex crushes feeling invisible or worse. A teacher should address the bias:
"You may have noticed that all the girls who said they had liked someone talked about having liked a boy. And the boys all talked about guys getting crushes on girls. The film should have shown that there are also kids who get crushes on someone of their own sex."

NOTE: Also see page 4.

FLASH Curriculum Film Reviews

The Puberty Workshop: Film 5 ... HIV and AIDS

(2012)

Yes = recommended (strengths outweigh flaws and we offer suggested scripting for simple teacher follow-up)

Strengths:

- Offers clear, easy-to-understand distinctions between HIV and AIDS and between bacteria and viruses.
- Gives straightforward information about which fluids and behaviors can transmit HIV and which ones can't
- Gives honest assessment that (a) HIV medications don't work for everyone and (b) we don't know whether they can keep someone from progressing to AIDS eventually
- Provides reassurance about casual transmission and support for treating people with HIV respectfully
- Is clear that the only way to know if you have HIV is by getting tested -- there's no need for more details about frequency of testing or the window period at grades 4-5. That is why we recommend it for those grades.
- Gives the simple message that HIV is preventable and encourages abstinence now and risk-reduction later – there's no need to elaborate about condoms at grades 4-5. That is why we recommend it for those grades.

Flaws or issues a teacher who uses the film should address:

- The definition of AIDS in the film is incorrect. The teacher should explain,
"A person with HIV is actually diagnosed as having progressed to AIDS when either they have too few T-cells (fewer than 200 per mm) or they start getting conditions and diseases that appear in people with damaged immune systems."
- We recommend using this film at grades 4 or 5. If using it at grade 6-7, the teacher address tattoos and piercing,
"The film forgot to tell you that people can catch HIV by using unsterilized equipment to get a piercing or a tattoo or by sharing ink for tattoos."
- We recommend using this film at grades 4 or 5. If using it at grade 6-7, the teacher should address condoms,
*"I agree with the film that the safest thing is not to have sex at your age. Not having oral, anal or vaginal sex and not sharing needles protects people **100%** from catching HIV. It's important to know, too, that when people do start having sex they can cut down the risk of HIV by a lot if they use condoms."*
- The graphics make and HIV virus look as big as a T-cell. A teacher could add,
"HIV viruses are actually much smaller than T-cells."

NOTE: Also see page 4.

FLASH Curriculum Film Reviews

Understanding HIV & AIDS

(2006)

Yes = recommended (strengths outweigh flaws and we offer suggested scripting for simple teacher follow-up)

Strengths:

- Not condescending. In fact, quite respectful of the student, even though much of it was scripted.
- Good job clearly distinguishing HIV from AIDS. We used to almost hyphenate them as a single word. We don't any more.
- Excellent prevention message about alcohol and other drugs increasing a person's risk of HIV by impairing their judgment.
- Very good modeling of co-ed, comfortable conversations.
- Very good message about the importance of getting tested.
- Good explanation of how the deterioration of an infected person's immune system is a gradual process. We used to teach that the infection was dormant for a time and then started to progress. That has changed with better science.
- Excellent message about treating people with HIV respectfully – very consistent with [4/5/6 FLASH](#) key concepts.
- Excellent messages about abstinence, standing up for yourself, and the mistaken belief that the majority of young teens are having sex – all very consistent with [FLASH](#) key concepts.
- Diverse cast.
- 18 minutes is short enough to allow time for an interactive lesson that will increase students' personalization and retention of the concepts.

Flaws or issues a teacher who uses the film should address:

- The definition of AIDS in the film is incorrect. The teacher should explain,
"A person with HIV is actually diagnosed as having progressed to AIDS when either they have too few T-cells (fewer than 200 per mm) or they start getting conditions and diseases that appear in people with damaged immune systems."
- The film says that pregnant women with HIV are given medicines close to the time of birth to reduce the risk to the fetus. A teacher should explain that the film is a little outdated in that respect.
"Nowadays, in countries that can afford the medications, women who have HIV can take medicine through the whole pregnancy, not just at the end. Fewer than 1 baby in 100 whose mom is taking HIV medicine will be born with HIV."

FLASH Curriculum Film Reviews

Your Body: Reproductive Systems

(1994)

OK = not recommended, but still usable (not so flawed that it should no longer be used, if your school can't afford to replace it)

Strengths:

- It features a male teacher who is relaxed and seems to have good rapport with students.
- It says, "Intercourse is usually a private activity of two loving adults." That and the visual that accompanies it are perhaps a little on the optimistic side, but it is not vulgar and it is sweet and it qualifies the statement with the word "usually" and it uses the adult term "intercourse" which **4/5/6 FLASH lesson 12** introduces, too.
- It introduces the medically accurate, adult terms "embryo," "fetus," "umbilical cord," and "placenta" which **4/5/6 FLASH lesson 13** does, as well.
- The childbirth scene is realistic without being too scary or too explicit for grades 4-6.

Flaws or issues a teacher who uses the film should address:

- All the families depicted are nuclear and heterosexual. That will render some students' families invisible. A teacher should say,

"You may have noticed that all the families in the film were mother-father-and-children families. The film is a little outdated and biased in that way. We know that there are also children who live with just one parent, two parents of the same sex, two different households, or grandparents and other guardians."

- The music and tone of voice may glorify pregnancy a bit, which is counterproductive in a curriculum one of the goals of which is teen pregnancy prevention. A teacher might say,

"The music is a little sappy. It makes pregnancy seem pretty amazing. And while it is, people have all different feelings about it from sadness to excitement, from fear to joy. It's personal and every two people experiencing it feel different from one another and different from time to time."

FLASH Curriculum Film Reviews

Talking Real

(1997)

No = not still usable (flaws outweigh strengths and are not correctable by simple teacher follow-up)

Strengths:

- It uses students' own voices on many issues.
- It introduces both male and female puberty and the teacher's explanation of why it does the latter and in a co-ed setting is a very good one.
- It offers a list of specific changes to expect and the age range to expect each one for boys and for girls and reassures students about a range of normal ages for developing..
- A couple of students in it do a good job of modeling self-confidence, even in the face of adults who seem to be assuming puberty will be scary and that people who start it earlier or later than their peers will feel inadequate. (Obviously, we felt the students' messages were great and the adults' messages, terrible in this regard.)
- It uses the phrase "if she wants to have a baby" (avoids assuming everyone will).
- One student describes her mother's reaction to the daughter's first period as, "Congratulations!"
- It is multiracial.

Flaws:

- The music, visuals, and tone at the beginning seemed scary.
- The movie seems to repeatedly reinforce the notion that puberty is weird, embarrassing, and nerve-wracking if not absolutely devastating.
- The male narrator has an odd, perhaps somewhat condescending, and very negative tone throughout. At a number of points he puts students on the spot, not just in front of peers but in front of the camera, to admit what they don't know and even to (inappropriately) self-disclose whether they have had nocturnal emissions! Likely to increase students' anxiety; abysmal modeling for teachers.
- Most of the visuals were confusing and hard to make sense of.
- Naming the naked bodies "Chad" and "Jenny" will raise all students' anxiety unnecessarily and likely lead to unavoidable bullying in classes where students have those names.
- The word *larynx* was mispronounced by the male adult; he confused the *cilia* & the *fimbria*..
- Uses the term "opposite sex." **FLASH** uses, instead, the terms "other" or "another" sex, contradicting the **FLASH** emphasis on similarities over differences (is service of reducing sexual violence).
- Even as it seems to want the opposite, the film almost invites students to stare when a peer gets an erection or needs to be excused to the bathroom for having started their period.
- The film uses the term "baby" when referring to a fertilized egg, embryo, or fetus. In this way it does a disservice to students with a loved one who has had an abortion or who ever consider it in the future. **FLASH** tries to take a more neutral position appropriate to all students' life experiences and all families' values.
- The female teacher gives a somewhat confusing explanation of penis size that we doubt will be very reassuring.
- The film makes the assumptions that all sexual feelings will be heterosexual, everyone will be married when they have a baby, every boy will feel upset about having nocturnal emissions, all sexual intercourse is an "act of love," every parent drives a car, and every student lives with their parents.

FLASH Curriculum Film Reviews

Puberty the Great Adventure for Guys and Girls

(5th ed., 2013)

No = not still usable (flaws outweigh strengths and are not correctable by simple teacher follow-up). We reviewed the 5th edition (2013) and found it still too flawed to recommend.

Strengths:

- The introduction by the narrator of ground rules
- The emphasis, first, on changes experienced by both boys and girls – very consistent with *FLASH*
- The message that “everyone goes through puberty differently” – a key concept of *FLASH*
- The message that people the same age can have all different body types, shapes, sizes – a key concept of *FLASH*

Flaws:

- The term “opposite sex” contradicts the *FLASH* key concept that the sexes are more alike than different. The latter is key to sexual violence prevention.
- Adults not only introduce the notion that puberty is stupid, freaky and that kids will feel “creeped out” discussing it, they repeatedly attempt to elicit feelings of discomfort from youth.
- It assumes everyone will use deodorant. *FLASH* authors would recommend a more culturally flexible message, such as, “Many families in the U.S. encourage their children to start using deodorant at puberty. It is more common in some cultures around the world than others.” In contrast, the message that it is good to wash more often at puberty is one we would call a community value, more universal than the deodorant message.
- The jungle analogy feels condescending; the shopping mall analogy, nonsensical.
- Offers student worksheets but not lesson plans (interactive activities).
- Uses the term “lips” for “labia” which would make some students, especially girls, extremely uncomfortable. Translating the Latin from *labia* literally, to *lips*, would be like translating the Latin word *penis* literally, to *tail*. Not necessary or appropriate.
- The narrator calls *cilia* by the wrong name, *fimbria*. The *fimbria* are the finger-like projections at the end of the Fallopian tubes that reach out to draw in eggs as they are released from an ovary. The *cilia* are the hairs inside the tube that wave like grasses to move the egg down the tube toward the uterus.
- The film assures girls “Your period will happen to you once a month” which is oversimplified in the best cases and untrue for many young women.
- It assumes all young women will use pads, not offering that tampons are an option (depending upon their family’s beliefs and preferences).
- It assumes that nocturnal emissions happen during a dream, which is not true, and calls them “freaky.”
- The film focuses on a few particular stores at the mall; we feel product placement is inappropriate in a film to be used in schools.

FLASH Curriculum Film Reviews

What Is AIDS?

(1995)

No = not still usable (flaws outweigh strengths and are not correctable by simple teacher follow-up)

Strengths:

- It clearly states, "AIDS is a disease [with] no known cure."
- The film contains some accurate messages about AIDS: AIDS is preventable; a person has to engage in risky behaviors to catch AIDS; and people who have AIDS may not know it,
- The film is respectful, accurate, and age-appropriate in responding to the question of why gay men get HIV in disproportionate numbers.
- It features a coed baseball team.
- The film contains some racial diversity, including an interracial family.
- The "germs" are colorful instead of black (versus the white t-cells), avoiding racial connotations

Flaws:

- The film still uses the term, "AIDS virus," which has long since been replaced with "HIV."
- The germs and t-cells seem a little juvenile; the music seems a little silly.
- The film sounds a little judgmental when it states a person has to be "careless" to catch AIDS.
- The film contains medical inaccuracies because it was created before most of the scientific discoveries about HIV (e.g., we are "powerless to stop it").
- Again because it is old, there's no mention of effective treatment (antiretroviral therapy, etc.), or the safety of our blood supply.
- The film states that [all] babies born to mothers with AIDS will get it, too. This never was the case. Before treatment for pregnant women became routine in the U.S., about 25-30% of babies born to HIV-infected women caught HIV.⁶ Today, with treatment, less than 1% becomes infected.⁷
- The film declares it is "highly unlikely" to catch AIDS from a drinking glass or a sneeze, leaving room for doubt. It is important to assure students that there is *no risk at all* from these kinds of casual contact.⁸

FLASH Curriculum Film Reviews

NOTES:

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- ¹ American Academy of Pediatrics (2010 August) *Girls are Beginning Puberty at a Younger Age*, Retrieved from: www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/Pages/Girls-are-Beginning-Puberty-at-a-Younger-Age.aspx
- ² American Academy of Pediatrics (2003, updated May, 2011) *Ages and Stages: Delayed Puberty*, Retrieved from: www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/puberty/pages/Delayed-Puberty.aspx
- ³ American Academy of Pediatrics (2012 October) *American Academy of Pediatrics Study Documents Early Puberty Onset in Boys*, Retrieved from: www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/Pages/AAP-Study-Documents-Early-Puberty-Onset-In-Boys.aspx
- ⁴ American Academy of Pediatrics (2003, updated May, 2011) *Ages and Stages: Delayed Puberty*
- ⁵ MedlinePlus, A service of the U.S. National Library of Medicine at the National Institutes of Health (April 2012) *Semen Analysis*, Retrieved from: www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003627.htm
- ⁶ Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (June 2006) *Achievements in Public Health: Reduction in Perinatal Transmission of HIV Infection --- United States, 1985—2005*. Retrieved from: www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5521a3.htm
- ⁷ Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (February, 2013) *HIV among Pregnant Women, Infants, and Children in the United States*. Retrieved from: www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/perinatal/
- ⁸ Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (March 2010) *HIV Transmission*. Retrieved from: www.cdc.gov/hiv/resources/qa/transmission.htm